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Implementation of integrated, coherent and coordinated support to South Sudan by the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General*

I. Introduction

1. Following the independence of South Sudan on 9 July 2011, the Economic and Social Council, through its resolution 2011/43, expressed interest in working with partners in addressing the extensive humanitarian, peacebuilding and development challenges facing the country. The present report is the seventh on South Sudan submitted to the Council since the country's independence.

2. The first report (E/2012/76) outlined the support of the United Nations system for the Government of South Sudan and the building of local capacity after the country's independence. The second report (E/2013/73) described the support provided to development and peacebuilding frameworks. The third report (E/2014/94) depicted how the outbreak of conflict in December 2013 reversed much of the progress made since independence. The fourth report (E/2015/74) provided a focus on the continuing impact of the conflict. The fifth report (E/2016/71) emphasized efforts to support the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (Peace Agreement) and a shift from emergency humanitarian aid towards long-term development priorities. The sixth report (E/2017/68) focused on the developments after the crisis in July 2016, which were characterized by continued instability, local fighting, further deterioration of the humanitarian situation, erosion of social cohesion, deepening economic crisis and a shift back from development priorities to emergency humanitarian aid.

3. The present report outlines the major developments that have occurred since the previous report to the Council. On 12 June 2017, the leaders of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the regional organization comprising Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and Uganda, endorsed the creation of the High-level Revitalization Forum to revitalize the defunct Peace Agreement with a threefold mandate: to restore a permanent ceasefire; to fully implement the

* The present report was submitted late in order to reflect the latest developments and analysis by the United Nations country team on the situation in South Sudan.

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Agreement; and to revise the Agreement's implementation schedule to hold elections at the conclusion of its timetable. At the Forum, on 21 December 2017, the conflicting parties signed the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access, thereby committing themselves to ceasing all hostilities as a first step to ending the war in South Sudan and revitalizing the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

4. At the end of the previous reporting period, in early 2017, South Sudan experienced localized famine in some areas of the country. In the second half of 2017, its political, economic and social crises continued to worsen and required a massive and growing humanitarian operation to provide life-saving assistance, prevent food insecurity and famine, provide access to basic services and support displaced people. At the end of the current reporting period, South Sudan is experiencing its worst ever food crisis and the highest number ever of people depending on humanitarian support to meet basic needs.

5. At the same time, there have been renewed efforts to strengthen support for recovery and resilience, to address underlying drivers and risk factors and to enable the South Sudanese to gain access to food, livelihoods and social services, such as health, nutrition, education and water and sanitation, within their own communities rather than from humanitarian aid. This is accompanied by and linked to a growing focus on supporting local peacebuilding in different parts of the country to mitigate increasingly localized conflicts. The Government has also finalized the three-year National Development Strategy, which seeks to consolidate peace and stabilize the economy, as well as improve access to basic services. Informed by fragility assessment, the Strategy provides strategic guidance for government efforts to escape from the current crisis. The third phase of the High-level Revitalization Forum had been scheduled to be held at the end of the reporting period but was postponed, and the outlook for success is uncertain. The government-led national dialogue is approaching its concluding phase. Through that process, an effort has been made to ensure that a variety of voices are heard, including South Sudanese refugees and the diaspora in neighbouring countries, on the future direction of the country, although concerns about its inclusivity continue to be expressed. The results from the national dialogue and the third High-level Revitalization Forum conference will influence the situation in the months to follow and will set the tone for the start of the implementation of the National Development Strategy, set for July 2018.

II. Context

6. Despite the revitalization of the Peace Agreement through the High-level Revitalization Forum and the new hope for progress that it brought, the situation has continued to deteriorate, and the international community faces serious challenges in its efforts to shift back from emergency humanitarian aid and the protection of civilians towards development priorities. A key factor having a strong impact on the situation is the continued fighting and violence in many parts of the country that have become increasingly fragmented and localized during the reporting period. Such violence prevents access by humanitarian and development actors and the formation of long-term partnerships required for capacity-building and recovery and causes an ongoing deterioration in access to food, livelihoods and services by the population. The farming areas in the southern part of the country have traditionally been the main producers of the country's cereal. The displacement of millions of people is at the heart of the current food insecurity situation, among other drivers. Many farmers from that area have fled and are currently refugees outside the country, and are prevented from returning home by ongoing local conflicts and violence. Consequently, the conflict and food security are directly interlinked with each other and affecting other

vital areas, including the wider economic situation. The current fragile government structures, lack of effective local governments in many parts of the country, perforated social fabric, lack of respect for the rule of law and human rights, and high level of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, in society have continued to prevent an improvement in conditions.

7. The humanitarian crisis in South Sudan deepened during the reporting period as a result of the cumulative effects of protracted conflict, displacement and economic decline. A rise in hunger portrays the clearest picture of the deteriorating humanitarian situation. While the localized famine in Unity State was stopped by mid-2017, a record high 6 million people were severely food-insecure in September 2017 and the underlying reasons for hunger remained unaddressed. In January 2018, some 5.3 million people, or 48 per cent of the population, faced severe food insecurity, 1.5 million more people compared with the same time in 2017. By the end of the reporting period in April 2018, some 7 million people, or nearly two thirds of the population of South Sudan, are projected to be at risk of hunger in the coming months without sustained humanitarian assistance and access. This would represent 57 per cent of the population and 1.4 million more people compared with the same time in 2017.

8. Malnutrition has reached an unprecedented level. More than 1.1 million children under the age of 5 are forecast to be malnourished in 2018, including nearly 300,000 severely malnourished and at a heightened risk of death. This makes 2018 the toughest year on record. Children, youth and pregnant or lactating women, in particular adolescents, in conflict-affected areas remain especially vulnerable to malnutrition. Micronutrient deficiencies, notably vitamin A, iron and iodine deficiencies, are common among children, young people and women.

9. Ongoing fighting and insecurity continued to force people to leave their homes in search of safety and assistance. More than 668,000 people fled the country in 2017, including some 355,000 to Uganda. Some 19,000 new South Sudanese refugees were registered in January 2018, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees anticipates that up to 500,000 refugees will have left the country by the end of the year. The region currently hosts more than 2.5 million South Sudanese refugees, and the conflict has created the third largest refugee crisis in the world, after the Syrian Arab Republic and Afghanistan. Some 1.8 million people remained internally displaced as at February 2018, including more than 200,000 people sheltering in the protection of civilians sites located on the bases of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Many internally displaced persons are forced to flee their homes multiple times, increasing their vulnerability and protection needs. As at February 2018, South Sudan hosted some 290,000 refugees from neighbouring countries.

10. Protection threats continued to intensify in scale and scope, with increasing numbers of areas newly affected by conflict and instability. The population remained exposed to repeated deliberate attacks on civilians and their assets and to other violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including conflict-related sexual violence and killings.

11. Destruction of health-care facilities, attacks on health workers and shortages of drugs and skilled professionals reduced people's access to health care. Preventable diseases, such as measles, spread unchecked, and the cholera outbreak that started in mid-2016 continued to claim lives throughout most of 2017. With only 22 per cent of health facilities fully operational, the absence of services meant that cases of emergency obstetric care, unmet need for family planning, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, clinical management of rape and mental health issues went largely untreated.

12. The situation for children deteriorated over the reporting period, with continued recruitment, abuse, exploitation and separation from families. An estimated 17,000

children continue to serve in the ranks of armed forces and groups. The destruction of schools and departure of teachers from many affected areas had a severe impact on access to education. By early 2018, three quarters of South Sudanese children were out of school — more than ever. The under-5 mortality rate was estimated at 91 per 1,000 live births in 2016, with 41 per cent of deaths among newborns, and the situation has since deteriorated. Routine immunization coverage declined from 80 per cent in 2011 to 75 per cent for measles and 58 per cent for polio and pentavalent-3 in 2017. Each week in South Sudan, malaria kills nearly 220 people, most of them children under age 5. Deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles and meningitis, are increasing. There are 138,586 AIDS-related orphans and 11,993 children under the age of 15 living with HIV.

13. The current economic situation in South Sudan remains challenging. Global oil prices have improved in the past few months, and the price of Brent crude reached $70 per barrel in January 2018. However, the increase has not significantly improved government revenue inflows. This is mainly because oil production levels have remained low at 120,000 barrels per day, which is a third of the level in 2010, just before independence, and because of continuing payment obligations to the Sudan and payment of past arrears. This has severely constrained the fiscal space, including the ability to pay salaries on time. In addition, the national currency, the South Sudanese pound, has continued to depreciate against the United States dollar, with the market rate about 250 pounds to $1, a drop of 58 per cent in one year. This has in part translated into increasing prices of essential commodities, including food. January 2018 became the twenty-sixth month of year-to-year triple digit inflation, at 125 per cent.

14. The recently finalized three-year National Development Strategy highlights that stabilizing the economy and consolidating peace are the main priorities of the Government. The expectation is that, after three years, citizens will feel safe to go about their business, will experience stability in prices, including the foreign exchange rate, and will receive better public services. Owing to fiscal space constraints, such changes can be delivered only through a strong partnership with the domestic and international private sector players, civil society, bilateral and multilateral partners and, above all, the people of South Sudan.

15. In May 2017, the World Bank renewed its engagement in South Sudan and launched a new country engagement note for the 2018–2019 fiscal years, with a budget of $410 million. It will focus on resilience strengthening as a short-term objective and on recovery and sustaining peace as medium-term objectives. International financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank, remain engaged in the country, albeit at a limited scale. As is the case for the World Bank, the eventual expansion of their support in the future will depend on the outcomes of the High-level Revitalization Forum and the broader peace process.

III. Impact of the conflict on development

16. During the reporting period, it became a more urgent challenge for the international community to strike a balance between meeting humanitarian life-saving needs and revitalizing long-term development priorities through a focus on recovery and resilience and building peace through a bottom-up process. That challenge emerged as a result of the cumulative consequences of the ongoing conflict on the humanitarian and economic situation, with growing humanitarian needs, and the lack of progress politically and continued conflict and violence. The economy contracted significantly in both 2016 and 2017, and government budgets for the

delivery of essential social services have been negligible and even further reduced owing to the lack of government funding and to government priorities related to the conflict. In the 2017/18 fiscal year, allocations to the security and public administration sectors amounted to nearly two thirds of the government budget, which marked a significant increase from the previous year, when those combined allocations amounted to half of the budget. In contrast, allocations to the social sectors consumed only 5 per cent of the budget.

17. The conflict has also further challenged the work of humanitarian organizations in delivering aid and interfered directly with United Nations operations. Humanitarian actors took major risks in reaching people in need amid clashes, insecurity and access denials. The year 2017 was the deadliest reported since the conflict broke out in December 2013. During the year, 30 aid workers were killed in the line of duty, 28 of them South Sudanese nationals, and some 600 humanitarians were relocated owing to insecurity. Humanitarian compounds and supplies were frequently looted, depriving people of much-needed assistance. Humanitarian operations were also affected by denial of access to field locations for aid workers; extortion at checkpoints; visits by the Criminal Investigation Department to organizational premises; and efforts by authorities to unduly influence staff recruitment processes. Taxes and fees imposed by the host Government remained unpredictable, high in relation to services provided and inconsistently administered, and diverted much-needed resources from front-line operations.

IV. United Nations support to South Sudan

18. Despite the challenges, the United Nations and its partners made significant strides during the reporting period. Humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors worked together and achieved results through integrated approaches, in particular at the local level in areas with relative stability. The famine in Unity State, declared in early 2017, was halted and prevented from spreading by midyear, thanks to the generous donor response and to a well-coordinated response across the food and livelihoods, nutrition, health and water, sanitation and hygiene clusters in cooperation with development partners. The longest cholera outbreak ever recorded in South Sudan was finally declared over in February 2018, as a result of a range of partners working together to enhance surveillance, deploy rapid response teams to investigate and respond to cases, provide clean water, promote good hygiene practices and treat cholera patients.

19. Combined humanitarian and development support for essential services in accessible and relatively stable areas improved the delivery of antenatal care, newborn immunization and treatment of acute malnutrition for children under 5, as well as malaria prevention and treatment. Classroom blocks were constructed and water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and kitchens and vegetable gardens in connection with schools were established, contributing to increased school enrolment. Training of community animal health workers and village extension facilitators was conducted, agricultural productivity increased, and access to and supply of national markets for food products improved. In accessible communities, where the United Nations was able to provide support, United Nations agencies reported that vulnerable groups were better able to cope with shocks as measured by the reduced coping strategy index and asset-based coping strategy index in the targeted communities. The food consumption score was stable or improved in targeted communities. Farmers' cooperatives improved their productivity through the introduction of seed varieties and extension services. Furthermore, the United Nations supported the Government in developing guidelines for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into national sustainable development plans and finalizing the draft national disaster risk

management policy. The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management was supported in kick-starting the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.

20. The humanitarian operation reached some 90 per cent of the people targeted in 2017. Over 5.1 million people received food assistance and emergency livelihood support. More than 2.5 million people received emergency health kits, 1.7 million people, including women and girls, received reproductive health information and services, and some 900,000 children and pregnant and breastfeeding women received emergency nutritional assistance. Over 9,000 additional women and girls started using modern family planning services, while 14,443 received skilled delivery at birth and 134 obstetric fistula survivors were treated. More than 2.2 million people benefited from water and sanitation programming; nearly 900,000 people were provided with vital emergency items, including blankets and mosquito nets; more than 390,000 children benefited from educational programming; and more than 94,000 children were vaccinated against measles. Over 560,000 people received services addressing gender-based violence. Approximately 35,000 explosive hazards were destroyed, far beyond the 15,000 set as the target for the year. This contributed directly to resilience-strengthening programmes, whereby communities could re-engage in their local livelihoods.

21. Throughout the response, the aid agencies and their partners continued to improve efficiencies while keeping affected people at the centre. For example, partners reached more than 1.3 million people in need through cash transfers and cash-based programmes in 2017, primarily under the food security and livelihoods cluster, as well as the shelter and non-food items cluster. In 2018, the Humanitarian Response Plan is targeting 6 million people. By February 2018, 1.4 million people had already been reached. It is evident that humanitarian needs will remain dire until guns are silenced and development can take root. More emphasis on resilience and peacebuilding, especially at the local level, continues to be an urgent joint priority for humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors.

22. Despite the crisis context, in 2017 United Nations agencies improved implementation performance with regard to the Interim Cooperation Framework across the range of recovery, resilience and peacebuilding activities and programmes. Support was provided to strengthen food security and the local economies, basic services, including education, health and water, sanitation and hygiene, and peace and governance and empowerment of women and youth processes; the deployment and pairing of South Sudanese civil servants with counterparts from IGAD member States was conducted; and capacity-building was provided to strengthen local peace committees. The capacity of existing cooperatives was also strengthened and new cooperatives were established to reinvigorate the local economies. Access to microfinance and lending services was provided to more than 1,000 women. The National Capacity Self-Assessment for the management of natural resources was finalized, and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan was developed.

23. The annual results and financial report on the implementation of the Interim Cooperation Framework for 2016, released in July 2017, was the first such report by the United Nations in South Sudan and demonstrates its commitment to a high level of transparency and accountability. A similar report for 2017 is currently being completed and shows continued improvements in delivery and results after the violent crisis in Juba in July 2016. While only one out of five Framework outcomes were on track in 2016, three out of five were on track at the end of 2017, with the most difficulties remaining in areas directly linked to the stalled peace process.

24. The improved performance in 2017 was due in part to adjustments to activity portfolios and new operational working arrangements. Agencies reduced the scale of

their workplans in many areas with difficult access and focused on those activities for which funding and capacity were in place and those in more stable geographic areas. They enhanced community-level engagement and work with local authorities, developed joint programmes or engaged in joint programming that leveraged agencies' capacity and reach to support joint outcomes, and enhanced programme flexibility to adapt to higher operational risk levels. The overall programme delivery under the Interim Cooperation Framework increased from $119 million in 2016 to $160 million in 2017. Joint programming advanced in 2017 with several new flagship programmes being launched, in some cases cutting across outcome areas. The joint recovery and stabilization programme in Aweil and the new joint programme being developed in Yambio contain key elements in support of several outcomes under the Framework. The new programme on dialogue and reconciliation, with financing from the Peacebuilding Fund, supports the outcome on peace and governance, while the gender-based violence prevention programme has brought a number of agencies together under the outcome on women and youth.

25. In late 2017, with support from the United Nations that emphasized the protection of culture in conflict, three cultural and natural sites within South Sudan were included in the tentative list of World Heritage Sites, namely the Boma-Badingilo migratory landscape, the Sudd wetland and the Deim Zubeir slave route, in line with Security Council resolution 2347 (2017).

V. Prospects and recommendations

26. During the reporting period, the United Nations country team supported the Government in preparing a basis for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals through support for analytical work and policy dialogue that will enable coordinated, focused and sequenced efforts to support progress towards key Goals, given the overall context. That work was also informed by the provisions of the national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. In November 2017, a draft inaugural report on the Sustainable Development Goals for South Sudan was completed, based on consultations with a range of stakeholders, including a national workshop and consultations among university students and other stakeholder groups. The report reviews the available evidence and provides detailed recommendations that are reflected in the National Development Strategy, including specific targets and indicators aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through that process, Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions, was identified as the most important Goal in South Sudan, one that would also function as an enabler of progress in other areas of the Goals, for example food security and hunger (Goal 2), which was identified as the second most important priority Goal. In the light of the famine and extreme food insecurity, ending hunger is widely seen as a crucial priority directly linked to the paramount need for ending violence and conflict. Food insecurity is a direct effect of the conflict and displacement; at the same time, it becomes a cause of conflict when the livelihoods of vulnerable communities are threatened and destroyed and trust and social cohesion are undermined. Goals with a high priority based on the report and the consultation process were Goals 4 (quality education) and 8 (inclusive economic growth and decent employment for all). Gender equality (Goal 5) was also highlighted in the report as one with a cross-cutting enabling impact across the Goals. The lack of data and statistics related to the Goals is a major challenge, and there is a need for targeted capacity-building of national partners in this area and for United Nations agencies and their international partners to continue and expand their efforts to conduct national surveys and collect relevant statistical information, for instance related to food security, malnutrition and resilience.

27. Peace and reconciliation require dialogue at all levels, and the high level of violence in the society and the limited freedom of expression show the urgent need for dialogue, as well as the challenges in conducting it. A number of initiatives were launched in the reporting period and are expected to advance and scale up in 2018. As part of the new Peacebuilding Fund joint programme on reconciliation and dialogue, a peacebuilding plan is being developed at the end of the reporting period to identify priorities and opportunities for peacebuilding support. The draft peacebuilding plan highlights that the current degree of trust among groups is low and grievances caused by past violations are strong. The draft plan therefore emphasizes the need for initiatives to build trust within society in the short term, while at the same time finding entry points for sustaining peace in the longer term.

28. In 2017, preparations began for a new United Nations cooperation framework for the period from 2019 to 2021. The new framework will build on the experiences with the Interim Cooperation Framework and lessons learned and will enhance and scale up the current resilience-based approach to programming across sectors, with a strong focus on recovery and peacebuilding. It will seek to expand the current focus on local areas that are relatively stable, with opportunities to scale up support for strengthening resilience, institutions and capacities in a coherent way in close cooperation with international and local partners. It will be based on the Sustainable Development Goals and focus on vulnerable groups and leave no one behind, including women and youth. Under the framework, stronger partnerships will be developed with civil society and funding from new sources, including global pooled funds and country-based funding mechanisms, will be sought. It is projected that total programme delivery under the United Nations cooperation framework will be $650 million, a 50 per cent increase over the Interim Cooperation Framework. The United Nations cooperation framework, which is based on consultations with the Government, donors and other partners, reached the finalization stage at the end of the reporting period.

29. The United Nations cooperation framework will implement a new way of working to ensure stronger synergies between humanitarian and development actors, including United Nations agencies and their partner non-governmental organizations, through agreement on collective outcomes. The draft framework suggests that food security and the prevention of gender-based violence could be two potential areas for applying a new way of working. The United Nations country team will also further strengthen cooperation with UNMISS, through joint programmes and other joint activities, and with other actors with political, security and peacebuilding mandates.

30. In March 2018, a high-level discussion was held with over 50 partners and donors in Juba, in which the participants took stock of current challenges and issues and discussed how to address vulnerabilities and improve joint work. The discussion concluded with a shared commitment to increasing support for resilience jointly through strategic and enhanced efforts to advance coordination, collaboration, co-location and commitment, with a road map to be developed and mapping of a geographical focus area to be conducted. Steps have already been taken in the current reporting period, and joint efforts on resilience-strengthening capacities have emerged in Aweil and Yambio and could become models to replicate though a flexible approach. Those initiatives will show how strategic integration can deliver more effective and efficient programming through a comprehensive approach that brings together collective efforts to address local political solutions and peacebuilding, development, humanitarian, security and environmental dimensions. They will build on the opportunities for strengthening local ownership of peace and development, where possible. At the end of the reporting period, experiences from Aweil demonstrated the potential of efficient and sustainable approaches towards finding a balance between humanitarian emergency aid on the one hand and long-term peace

and development priorities on the other, with a potential shift in focus from meeting needs to reducing needs, risks and vulnerability. A solution to the severe challenges faced by South Sudan will, first and foremost, require a fundamental shift towards peace, and United Nations agencies and their partners have shown the potential for promoting such a shift through an increased focus on delivering effective and integrated support in local areas that are relatively stable and with ownership and the willingness to address issues among local partners.